



News Release



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
1445 Ross Ave., Dallas, TX 75202-2733
www.epa.gov/region6
(214) 665-2200

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 4301, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4301
www.deq.state.la.us/
(225) 219-3969

Sept. 30, 2005

Top State and Federal Environmental Officials Discuss Progress and Tasks Ahead After Hurricanes

BATON ROUGE -- EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, EPA Regional Administrator Richard E. Greene and DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel met on Thursday, Sept. 29, to discuss the environmental challenges brought on by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Since the hurricane hit the region, the state's environmental offices have been converted into a unified command center for federal and state environmental efforts. More than 200 EPA officials, staff and contractors have relocated to Baton Rouge over the past month. The joint housing of federal and state environmental staff has resulted in an effective and well-coordinated response by the environmental agencies.

"Collaboration between the local, state, and federal partners is key to this entire effort," Johnson said. "EPA and the DEQ have a strong relationship which allows us to better serve the residents of the impacted communities." McDaniel said the state is pleased to have the federal assistance.

"The task before us is enormous," McDaniel said. "EPA has been and will continue to be an important partner as we move forward."

At the meeting, McDaniel discussed the work that still lies ahead for both environmental agencies by offering the following estimates of the damaged region:

- 22 million tons of debris;
- 140,000 to 160,000 homes that may need to be demolished;
- 350,000 automobiles that must be drained of oil and gasoline and then recycled;
- 1 million tons of white goods that must be recycled;
- Tens of millions of tons of hazardous waste must be collected and properly disposed;
- Approximately 1,000 underground storage tanks must be addressed; and,
- An estimated 60,000 boats must be staged and may be destroyed.

The officials noted that they are nearing the end of the assessment phase in the areas impacted by Katrina. They are working to put in place household hazardous waste collection plans and staging areas for debris separation, removal and disposal. In southwest Louisiana, the agencies are assessing the situation and have inspected more than 125 facilities. Both EPA and DEQ have been sampling the air, water and land since the hurricanes struck.

The environmental officials reminded returning residents to heed warnings about the dangers of reentry and to listen to the public health advisories.

For the latest information on EPA and DEQ environmental efforts, visit:
www.deq.louisiana.gov or www.epa.gov/region6.